

How to cite:

Parcerisa, L., Fontdevila, C., & Verger, A. (2020). Understanding the PISA Influence on National Education Policies: A Focus on Policy Transfer Mechanisms. In: S. Jornitz & A. Wilmers (Eds.). *International Perspectives on School Settings, Education Policy and Digital Strategies. A Transatlantic Discourse in Education Research* (pp. 185-198). Barbara Budrig Verlag.

Understanding the PISA influence on national education policies: a focus on policy transfer mechanisms¹

Lluís Parcerisa², Clara Fontdevila³ and Antoni Verger⁴

1. Introduction

Over the last decades, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has acquired an increasingly relevant and authoritative role in the global governance of education. The influence of the OECD in education owes much to the greater focus of this international organization on the production of new sources of quantitative data, and to the comparative perspective through which these data is approached (Grek, 2009; Martens & Jakobi, 2010). This shift has been driven by different data-gathering initiatives, among which the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) stands out. Since its first edition in the year 2000, PISA has been administered every three years in an increasing number of countries. Nearly 80 countries have participated in the 2018 edition. According to different observers, PISA has represented a turning point for the OECD and has consolidated its leading role within the global education field (Niemann & Martens, 2018). The success of PISA relies, on the one hand, on its capacity to commensurate complex educational processes, such as teaching and learning, in concrete numerical indicators and, on

¹ This work has been supported by the European Research Council under the European Union's "Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation" [grant number 680172 – REFORMED].

² Lluís Parcerisa is a Research Fellow at the Department of Sociology at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Email: Lluís.Parcerisa@uab.cat

³ Clara Fontdevilla is a PhD Researcjer in the Department of Sociology at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Email: clara.fontdevila@gmail.com

⁴ Antoni Verger is Associate Professor at the Faculty of Political Science and Sociology at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Email: antoni.verger@uab.cat

the other, on the country comparisons that result from this quantification exercise (Martens, 2007; Grek, 2009).

The impact of PISA on domestic policy-making processes has become a well-established and recurring theme within global education studies. While Breakspear noted in 2012 that research into the effects of PISA over national education reform was still limited, considerable progress has been achieved since then. There is mounting evidence of the influence of PISA at different stages of the policy cycle (see for instance Carvalho & Costa, 2014; or Steiner-Khamsi & Waldow, 2018). However, evidence on the influence of PISA remains fragmentary and privileges particularistic accounts and specific country-cases. Also, there is limited evidence on how or whether the influence of PISA on national policy-making results into some form of policy convergence – that is, to what extent country reactions to PISA share a common policy orientation.

This chapter aims at gaining a better understanding of the role of the OECD in the global dissemination of education policies through the PISA program. More specifically, it aims at identifying those mechanisms through which the PISA program shapes or influences processes of domestic education reform. To this purpose, we focus on PISA's role in transferring accountability and assessment policies in education. Accountability and assessment policies represent a potentially productive entry point to understand PISA influence for two different (albeit interconnected) reasons. First, as we have discussed elsewhere (Verger et al., 2019a; see also Gorur, 2016; Meyer, 2014), the accountability and assessment themes have gained centrality within the OECD educational agenda in the mid-2000s; since then, they feature among the most recurrent policy recommendations found on OECD's policy guidance initiatives and research products. Second, according to a survey distributed in 2011 among national representatives in the PISA Governing Board, assessment and accountability constitute the area of PISA policy analysis that countries have judged as the most influential in domestic policy-making processes (Breakspear, 2012)⁵.

2. Research framework

The international spread of policy models and policy instruments across countries is frequently explained through policy diffusion and policy transfer theories – that is, theories that emphasize transnational interdependence as a key driver of the dissemination and propagation of certain policies (Dobbin, Simmons & Garrett, 2007; Gilardi, 2012).

⁵ A survey previously conducted by Hopkins et al. (2008) suggested similar trends – according to the key stakeholders surveyed, the development of national standards and the establishment of national institutes of evaluation were among the reforms most likely to be adopted in light of PISA results; also, the establishment or further development of accountability systems and increased autonomy for schools were listed as frequently reported changes in school practices and policies.

Most studies falling within this area of research tend to focus on bilateral relationships and to suffer from a form of state-centrism that neglects the role of international policy intermediaries (Stone, 2012). However, more recently, there has been a growing reflection on the role played by non-state and transnational actors in policy diffusion and transfer processes.

Conventionally, three main mechanisms behind policy diffusion dynamics can be differentiated, namely competition, policy learning and emulation⁶. In the following lines, we describe briefly each of these mechanisms while highlighting the potential role of international organizations in activating them.

- (a) *Competition* occurs when countries' decisions are motivated by the behavior of their competitors and a sense of a zero-sum game. Competition mechanisms are usually identified in the diffusion of economic policy – as the ultimate goal of such efforts is to secure a certain share of a limited resource, including global capital, access to global trade or export markets, etc. (Dobbin, Simmons and Garrett, 2007). International organizations play a key role in the promotion of competition by providing the infrastructure for such dynamics to occur, such as the construction of investment indicators or the publication of country rankings (Doshy, Kelley & Simmons, 2004).
- (b) *Learning* (also known as lesson-drawing) refers to those cases in which a certain policy is adopted on the basis of its consequences and (perceived) success elsewhere (Magetti and Gilardi, 2016; Shipan and Volden, 2008). As noted by Marsh and Sharman (2009), learning can occur on a bilateral basis but can also be mediated or encouraged by international organizations, international policy networks or epistemic communities engaged in transnational problem solving.
- (c) *Emulation* captures those instances in which a policy option is adopted for symbolic or normative reasons - including a desire for conformity or a quest for legitimacy. Meseguer (2004) notes that the legitimacy and reputational concerns behind emulation dynamics may have a domestic dimension (i.e. a government's need to legitimize its agenda in front of its citizens), but also a global one (countries' need to conform to global norms). Again, transnational actors can play a key role in the promotion of policy models, not only by constructing these models, but also by

⁶ Some categorizations, including the seminal classification advanced by Dolowitz and Marsh (1996, 2000) consider a fourth mechanism – namely, coercion or coercive transfer. However, other authors exclude this mechanism from the diffusion mechanism category as, unlike learning, emulation and competition, coercion has a vertical or top-down nature and implies the existence of a central force coordinating policy spread (cf. Maggetti and Gilardi, 2016; Shipan and Volden, 2008) - thus constituting a distinct category, difficult to reconcile with those approaches to policy diffusion emphasizing the notion of decentralized coordination (Busch & Jörgens, 2007).

generating the legitimacy pressures that encourage countries to adopt them (cf. Holzinger & Knill, 2005).

It should be noted, however, that the distinction between these three mechanisms is essentially analytical. In fact, in empirical situations, differentiating between emulation and learning dynamics represents a particularly challenging endeavor. As noted by different authors, such distinction ultimately depends upon the interpretation of the logics and reasoning guiding policy-makers, and is consequently mediated by one's theoretical lens (cf. Marsh and Shaman, 2009). Some authors have proposed different approaches to differentiate learning from emulation. Shipan and Volden (2008), for instance, suggest that learning dynamics put the emphasis on successful policies, whereas emulation dynamics put the emphasis on successful countries. Gilardi (2012), in turn, observes that learning relies on the logic of consequences (that is, the evaluation of the outcomes of a given course of action or its alternatives), whereas emulation relies on the logic of appropriateness (which considers what social norms deemed more adequate or pertinent in relation to a given role, identity or situation).

Overall, policy diffusion literature represents a promising theoretical approach to understand the role of the OECD/PISA in the spread of assessment and accountability reforms across a wide spectrum of countries. Specifically, this chapter examines the role of PISA in facilitating or stimulating educational change through each of the above-mentioned mechanisms of policy diffusion. In terms of methodology, the chapter builds on the results of a document analysis of OECD publications with a focus on accountability policies, and the results of a systematic literature review on processes of policy adoption and policy instrumentation of accountability reforms, which is based on a total of 158 papers obtained through the SCOPUS database (cf. Verger et al., 2019b for an overview of the procedure). To elaborate this chapter, we rely on a subset of 33 papers with an explicit focus on the role of the OECD in the promotion and diffusion of accountability reforms.

3. Mechanisms of PISA policy influence

3.1. Competitive dynamics generated by PISA: Scandalizing countries by comparison

The policy influence exerted by PISA stems largely from the presentation of its results under the form of country rankings and league tables. As noted by Gilbert (2015), rankings bring reputation to the fore and contribute to the emergence of a hierarchical reputational economy. In this context, competition dynamics are likely to emerge as countries strive to escalate rankings or to preserve a leading position in them. By altering the informational environment, rankings can increase social pressure among policy-makers and bureaucrats due to reputational concerns (Doshi, Kelley & Simmons, 2004). We assume thus that the

impact of PISA is largely explained by the competition dynamics it triggers.

The statistical data produced through PISA has indeed been reported to trigger competition at different levels as a direct result of the “naming and shaming” dynamics and the audit culture that this international assessment, through its comparative approach, generates. As noted by Sellar, Thompson and Rutkowski (2017), PISA promotes the engagement of participant countries in a sort of “global education race” aimed at constantly improving students’ performance in a highly competitive and interdependent economic environment. This education race intensifies for political but also economic reasons since, in a globalizing economic environment, students’ knowledge and skills become a governmental asset to attract foreign investors and to aspire to generate more knowledge-intensive jobs. The US engagement with PISA results is quite illustrative of the competitive pressures brought about by PISA benchmarking. During the 2000s, US authorities did not pay so much attention to the release of PISA reports, since the country results mainly confirmed the quality education concerns that had been present in the national debate for decades (Hursh, 2007). Nevertheless, the US started to react to PISA results after the 2009 edition. In PISA 2009, China’s performance surpassed the US, and this overtaking was framed and interpreted in the US as a symbol of China’s economic superiority (Niemann et al., 2017).

Overall, competition dynamics have proven to be an effective form of framing and conditioning policy decisions in the context of the OECD (Marcussen, 2004). Breakspear (2012) shows that the PISA Governing Board representatives consider the publication of league tables as one of the most persuasive aspects of PISA to advance policy change. The perception, anticipation or fear of damaged reputation or self-image appears thus to be a powerful catalyzer of policy reform.

The connection between reputational damage and policy change is frequently mediated by a change or disruption of domestic policies, and by changes in the terms of the public debate – for instance, through the creation of a narrative about a crisis that requires urgent action. In Norway, for example, the scandalization effect caused by both PISA 2000 and PISA 2003 results facilitated the crystallization of a political consensus around the need of further accountability and quality assurance in education (Hatch, 2013; Camphuijsen, Skedsmo, & Møller, 2018). During the decade that followed, the country engaged in different reforms on accountability, testing and curriculum, portrayed as highly inspired by “the policy advice that emerged from the PISA studies” (Sjøberg, 2016, p. 109). Comparable dynamics can be observed in Spain, where the PISA shock played a key role in the eventual acceptance of the accountability and external evaluation agenda within the social-democratic party (the Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party, PSOE) during the mid-2000s, and opened a phase of (relative) bipartisan convergence that enabled the adoption of performance evaluation arrangements and accountability-oriented policies (Dobbins & Christ, 2019; Popp, 2010). Similarly, in Denmark, disappointing PISA results played a key role in fostering a public debate that ultimately led to a major education reform

in 2006 in which accountability through assessment featured prominently. Remarkably, the impact of PISA-triggered reputational concerns on Danish policy-making dynamics persisted over time – to the point that, in 2010, the Danish Prime Minister stated that the aim of the education system was to secure a position among the top five nations listed in the PISA report (Moos, 2010).

More in general, there is evidence that the existence of a gap between national expectations and the results obtained in PISA has frequently favored the opening of a window of political opportunities for the introduction of certain educational reforms (Breakspear, 2012; Martens & Niemann, 2013). “PISA effects” or “PISA shocks” have been documented in countries such as Germany, Switzerland, England and Australia. In these countries, PISA results have fostered public debates leading to the adoption of assessment and external evaluation arrangements at some level (cf. Baxter & Clarke, 2013; Gorur, 2013; Niemann, Martens, & Teltemann, 2017; Sellar & Lingard, 2013).

Overall, available evidence shows that PISA plays a crucial role in creating an appetite for reform among decision-makers and impacts agenda-setting dynamics at a domestic level. It is less obvious, however, how (or whether) these “PISA shocks” condition and shape the specific policy response – that is, the content of the policy reforms motivated by (or justified on the grounds of) PISA. As the examples above suggest, there is evidence that PISA induced crises have frequently led to the adoption of accountability and external assessment policies. There is however no obvious explanation for this. To a certain extent, it is possible to assume that the very participation in PISA may increase the legitimacy and social acceptance of rankings and external evaluation – both among policy circles and the public. It is also likely that PISA crises will increase the appeal of output-oriented governance models as a means to improve performance at the system level. However, the interpretation and translation of PISA results into some form of policy guidance has also become instrumental in processes of educational policy change. This is something that we explore in the section that follows.

3.2. Learning and emulation: What PISA tells us about “what works” in education

PISA data is customarily used by the OECD as a key source of evidence to support and disseminate policy recommendations, or to promote certain policy models. While this has been the case since the publication of the first PISA results, such dynamics intensified in the mid-2000s, when the OECD stopped outsourcing the elaboration of the PISA reports to external contractors. Specifically, since the 2006 PISA cycle, the final PISA products are produced in-house, what provides the organization with greater capacity to frame and control the message and policy lessons resulting from the data (Bloem, 2015).

PISA data remains thus the most relevant source for policy development and policy dissemination activities of the OECD – it lies at

the center of the normative work of the organization. The results of the assessment are translated into policy lessons and recommendations (Bloem, 2015; Engel, 2015) and advance through a wide range of knowledge products – including *PISA in Focus*, *Education Indicators in Focus* or the *Strong Performers and Successful reformers* video series. However, the translation of PISA results into education best practices does not rest exclusively with the OECD. As advanced by Waldow (2017), national and regional governments usually produce their own PISA reports, and local stakeholders and the media do frequently engage in the construction, depiction and promotion of PISA top-scorers as “reference societies”. These countries often serve as models worth imitating – or learning from.

Thus, by providing empirical foundations to the depiction of certain policy options as successful or superior, PISA is likely to trigger both learning and emulation dynamics. Hence, countries are likely to engage in education policy reform on the basis of certain perceptions of “what works” that build largely on PISA data, conveniently translated by the OECD.

The impact of the PISA-based analytic and normative work conducted by the OECD, as well as the resulting learning and emulation dynamics, are particularly evident in relation to the accountability and assessment debate. First, the OECD appears to have played a crucial role in articulating and disseminating accountability and assessment in education as a policy approach that is both effective and desirable. As we have discussed elsewhere (Verger et al., 2019a), accountability and assessment (along with other policies, including school autonomy) have occupied a prominent position within the organization’s agenda for nearly two decades, and a variety of publications (produced by the different units of the Directorate for Education and Skills) have promoted such policies as the solution to a wide variety of problems.

More specifically, publications such as *PISA in Focus No. 9* or the working paper *School accountability, autonomy, choice, and the level of student achievement: International evidence from PISA 2003* (OECD, 2011, and Woessman et al., 2007, respectively), which drew largely on PISA data, played a key role in positing the combination of accountability and autonomy as conducive to the improvement of student learning. The latter argued that pedagogic school autonomy (i.e. autonomy and responsibility over curricula, evaluation style and didactics) was positively associated with higher PISA scores, and that managerial autonomy (concerning staffing and resource-allocation decisions) worked in those systems with high levels of accountability – measured as the publication of schools’ results in national assessments. Although more recent initiatives have shifted away from the initial emphasis on market dynamics or high-stakes accountability, certain principles (including the culture of evaluation and assessment, transparency and a focus on outcomes) have consolidated as highly desirable and as a key component of modern education systems.

Second, recent episodes of education policy reforms are indicative of learning and emulation dynamics somehow influenced by PISA results - or by PISA-based advice. As noted above, distinguishing

learning from emulation poses an interpretative challenge – as the ultimate motivations and reasoning guiding policy-makers cannot be directly observed. The reviewed cases suggest in fact that, generally speaking, PISA-data sparked a combination of them.

In the case of Spain, for instance, literature suggests that some education reforms at the regional level were partially informed by PISA findings. There is evidence that policy-makers' perceptions on "what works" in Spain was partially informed by PISA-based policy guidance. This is for instance the case of Catalonia, where the perception of school autonomy and external assessment as desirable policy solutions, consolidated among certain policy circles since the mid 2000s, owes much to the dissemination of these ideas by the OECD through PISA and other products associating this policy option with better-performing education systems (Verger & Curran, 2014). These processes can be interpreted as indicative of learning dynamics. They suggest a genuine belief in the potential of certain components of the accountability agenda – empirically substantiated by PISA. At the same time, there is also evidence that such learning was, in any case, partial and selective – and that references to PISA findings were also used with legitimizing purposes. As noted by Verger and Curran (2014), the attention to certain practices promoted by the OECD (including external assessment) among Catalan policy-makers contrasts with the neglect of other recommendations advanced by the same organization (for instance, the need to combine school-level reforms with system-level reforms). Similarly, certain recommendations have been re-interpreted and adopted in a selective, interested way. This is the case of OECD advice regarding school autonomy. While OECD products have tended to emphasize the potential of *pedagogic* autonomy (given its positive association with school effectiveness), recent policy changes in the Catalan context have tended to focus on the devolution of managerial tasks to the school level, thus privileging the advance of *managerial* autonomy. Overall, this suggests that the recommendations deriving from PISA, as well as other sources of OECD policy advice, simultaneously serve learning and legitimation purposes.

The cases of Italy and Ireland, in turn, are illustrative for the emulation dynamics triggered by PISA-based OECD recommendations. According to the reviewed literature, the advance of accountability and assessment reforms in these contexts owes much to the role of the OECD in the promotion of an "evaluation culture" – and the need or interest of these countries to "comply with" such recommendations. The adoption of national assessments, evaluation and autonomy systems would not be driven by a logic of consequences (as it did not intend to address any particular problem) but rather by a logic of appropriateness (that is, by the symbolic or legitimizing power of such reforms). In the case of Italy, for instance, Grimaldi and Serpieri (2014) observe that international comparisons have favored the advance of education policies inspired by the logic of benchmarking, and that PISA results in particular played a key role in creating an appetite for a culture of evaluation. Such evaluation culture, however, would have long remained a rhetoric device before penetrating the level of practice – Italy is regarded as a late-

adopter of standardized testing, and schools' and teachers' evaluation arrangements were not launched until 2010 under the form of pilot programs (see similar findings for the case of Ireland in McNamara, O'Hara, Boyle and Sullivan 2009).

4. Conclusions

PISA's role in the international dissemination of policy ideas such as accountability and assessment in education is multifaceted. The most evident policy transfer mechanism through which PISA promotes changes in accountability and assessment policies at the country level is competition. Competition, "shame and blame" dynamics and performative pressures are powerful and particularly well-theorized triggers of policy change, although they do not suffice to explain how policy diffusion happens in the educational domain. Beyond competition, we have also observed how the OECD, through PISA and PISA-related initiatives, has been able to trigger the mechanisms of policy learning and emulation as well.

Despite the centrality of the competition mechanism to understand PISA's influence, more research is necessary to gain further understanding of which countries are more likely to adopt a competitive mindset and behavior in the context of education reform. For instance, shall we assume that poor-performers or those "lagging behind" face greater reform pressure? Or, would rather the impact of PISA among "mid-performers" (Germany, Denmark, Norway) suggest that the gap between self-perception and PISA results are a more powerful trigger of policy change? Also, it would be interesting to gain insight into the pressures resulting from high performance in PISA, and the challenges that league leaders face to sustain the reputational capital that comes with outstanding PISA results.

Our findings do not take for granted that there is some form of intentionality behind the PISA program to influence countries' policies. Despite existing evidence of the policy effects of PISA, which in this chapter we have illustrated by focusing on accountability and assessment reforms, these effects cannot be exclusively attributed to PISA (not even to PISA-based advice). Instrumentalization dynamics on the reception side (i.e. countries), as well as the analytic work produced in other OECD divisions, might be of great(er) relevance to explain the international diffusion of the accountability agenda. Overall, we argue that PISA is useful in "making the case" for education reform, but that the content and approach of these reforms is more likely to be shaped by the policy work conducted in other OECD units and teams (i.e. not only through the "translation" of PISA data into policy advice, but also through a variety of products that are not necessarily based on PISA, or in which PISA results play a secondary or auxiliary role). Future research could delve into the micro-politics of the OECD in order to understand to what extent/whether there is a significant degree of coordination between different OECD operational units and governing boards, or to what extent the PISA governing board and the PISA staff are aware of the

policy usages given to the assessment results, and whether they would prefer that PISA policy effects move in a different direction.

5. References

- Baxter, J., & Clarke, J. (2013). Farewell to the tick box inspector? Ofsted and the changing regime of school inspection in England. *Oxford Review of Education*, 39(5), 702–718.
- Bloem, S. (2015). The OECD directorate for education as an independent knowledge producer through PISA. In H. G. Kotthoff & E. Klerides (Eds.), *Governing Educational Spaces* (pp. 169–185). Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.
- Breakspear, S. (2012). *The policy impact of PISA: An exploration of the normative effects of international benchmarking in school system performance* (OECD Education Working Papers, No. 71). Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Busch, P. O., & Jörgens, H. (2005). The international sources of policy convergence: explaining the spread of environmental policy innovations. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 12(5), 860–884.
- Camphuijsen, M. Skedsmo, G., & Møller, J. (2018, September). *School autonomy with accountability as a global education reform: Its adoption and re-contextualization in the Norwegian context*. Paper presented at the European Conference on Educational Research (ECER), Bolzano, Italy.
- Carvalho, L. M., & Costa, E. (2014). Seeing education with one's own eyes and through PISA lenses: considerations of the reception of PISA in European countries. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 36(5), 638–646.
- Dobbin, F., Simmons, B., & Garrett, G. (2007). The global diffusion of public policies: Social construction, coercion, competition, or learning? *Annual Review of Sociology*, 33, 449–472.
- Dobbins, M., & Christ, C. (2019). Do they matter in education politics? The influence of political parties and teacher unions on school governance reforms in Spain. *Journal of Education Policy*, 34(1), 61–82.
- Dolowitz, D., & Marsh, D. (1996). Who Learns What from Whom: A Review of the Policy Transfer Literature. *Political Studies*, 44(2), 343–357.

- Dolowitz, D. P., & Marsh, D. (2000). Learning from abroad: The role of policy transfer in contemporary policy-making. *Governance*, 13(1), 5–23.
- Doshi, R., Kelley, J., & Simmons, B. (2004). The Power of Ranking: The Ease of Doing Business Indicator and Global Regulatory Behavior. *International Organization*, 1-33.
- Engel, L. C. (2015). Steering the national: exploring the education policy uses of PISA in Spain. *European Education*, 47(2), 100-116.
- Gilardi, F. (2012). Transnational Diffusion: Norms, Ideas, and Policies. In W. Carlsnaes, T. Rise, & B. Simmons (Eds.), *Handbook of International Relations (2nd ed)* (pp. 453–477). Zurich: SAGE Publications.
- Gilbert, P. R. (2015). Commentary: The ranking explosion. *Social Anthropology*, 23(1), 83–86.
- Gorur, R. (2013). My school, my market. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 34(2), 214–230.
- Gorur, R. (2016). Seeing like PISA: A cautionary tale about the performativity of international assessments. *European Educational Research Journal*, 15(5), 598–616.
doi:10.1177/1474904116658299
- Gorur, R. (2016). Seeing like PISA: A cautionary tale about the performativity of international assessments. *European Educational Research Journal*, 15(5), 598–616.
- Grek, S. (2009). Governing by numbers: The PISA effect in Europe. *Journal of Education Policy*, 24(1), 23–37.
- Grimaldi, E., & Serpieri, R. (2014). Italian education beyond hierarchy: Governance, evaluation and headship. *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*, 42(4S), 119–138.
- Hatch, T. (2013). Beneath the surface of accountability: Answerability, responsibility and capacity-building in recent education reforms in Norway. *Journal of Educational Change*, 14(2), 113–138.
- Holzinger, K., & Knill, C. (2005). Causes and conditions of cross-national policy convergence. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 12(5), 775–796.
- Hopkins, D., Pennock, D., Ritzen, J., Ahtaridou, E., & Zimmer, K. (2008). *External Evaluation of the Policy Impact of PISA (EDU/PISA/GB(2008)35/REV1)*. Paris: OECD Publishing.

- Hursh, D. (2007). Assessing No Child Left Behind and the rise of neoliberal education policies. *American Educational Research Journal*, 44(3), 493–518.
- Maggetti, M., & Gilardi, F. (2016). Problems (and solutions) in the measurement of policy diffusion mechanisms. *Journal of Public Policy*, 36(1), 87–107.
- Marcussen, M. (2004). Multilateral surveillance and the OECD: Playing the idea game. In K. Armingeon & M. Beyeler (Eds.), *The OECD and European welfare states* (pp. 13–31). Cheltenham, UK/Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Marsh, D., & Sharman, J. C. (2009). Policy diffusion and policy transfer. *Policy Studies*, 30(3), 269–288.
- Martens, K. (2007). How to become an influential actor – The “comparative turn” in OECD education policy. In K. Martens, A. Rusconi, & K. Lutz (Eds.), *Transformations of the state and global governance* (pp. 40–56). London: Routledge.
- Martens, K., & Jakobi, A. P. (2010). Introduction: The OECD as an actor in international politics. In K. Martens & A. P. Jakobi (Eds.), *Mechanisms of OECD governance: International incentives for national policy-making?* (pp. 1–25). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Martens, K., & Niemann, D. (2013). When do numbers count? The differential impact of the PISA rating and ranking on education policy in Germany and the US. *German Politics*, 22(3), 314–332.
- McNamara, G., O'Hara, J., Boyle, R., & Sullivan, C. (2009). Developing a culture of evaluation in the Irish public sector: the case of education. *Evaluation*, 15(1), 101–112.
- Meseguer, C. (2004). What role for learning? The diffusion of privatisation in OECD and Latin American countries. *Journal of Public Policy*, 24(3), 299–325.
- Meyer, H. D. (2014). The OECD as pivot of the emerging global educational accountability regime: How accountable are the accountants. *Teachers College Record*, 116(9), 1–20.
- Moos, L. (2014). Educational governance in Denmark. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 13(4), 424–443
- Niemann, D., Martens, K., & Teltemann, J. (2017). PISA and its consequences: Shaping education policies through international comparisons. *European Journal of Education*, 52(2), 175–183

- Niemann, D., & Martens, K. (2018). Soft governance by hard fact? The OECD as a knowledge broker in education policy. *Global Social Policy, 18*(3), 267–283.
- OECD. (2011). *PISA in Focus, No. 9. School autonomy and accountability: Are they related to student performance?* Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Popp, M. (2014). New Culture, Old System—Reactions to Internationalization in Spanish Education Policy. In: Martens, K., & Knodel, P. *Internationalization of Education Policy: A new constellation of statehood in education?* (pp. 163–178). Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Sellar, S., & Lingard, B. (2013). The OECD and global governance in education. *Journal of Education Policy, 28*(5), 710–725.
- Sellar, S., Thompson, G., & Rutkowski, D. (2017). *The global education race: Taking the measure of PISA and international testing*. Edmonton, Canada: Brush Education.
- Shipan, C. R., & Volden, C. (2008). The mechanisms of policy diffusion. *American Journal of Political Science, 52*(4), 840–857.
- Sjøberg, S. (2016). OECD, PISA, and globalization: The influence of the international assessment regime. In C.H. Tienken & C. A. Mullen (Eds.), *Education policy perils: Tackling the tough issues*. New York: Routledge, pp. 114–145.
- Steiner-Khamsi, G., & Waldow, F. (2018). PISA for scandalisation, PISA for projection: the use of international large-scale assessments in education policy making—an introduction. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 16*(5), 557–565.
- Stone, D. (2012). Transfer and translation of policy. *Policy Studies, 33*(6), 483–499,
- Verger, A., Fontdevila, C., & Parcerisa, L. (2019a). Constructing school autonomy with accountability as a global policy model: A focus on OECD's governance mechanisms. In C. Ydesen (Ed.), *The OECD's Historical Rise in Education: The Formation of a Global Governing Complex*. Palgrave, pp. 219–243.
- Verger, A., Fontdevila, C., & Parcerisa, L. (2019b). Reforming governance through policy instruments: How and to what extent standards, tests and accountability in education spread worldwide. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 40*(2), 248–270.

- Verger, A., & Curran, M. (2014). New public management as a global education policy: Its adoption and re-contextualization in a Southern European setting. *Critical Studies in Education*, 55(3), 253–271.
- Waldow, F. (2017). Projecting images of the ‘good’ and the ‘bad school’: Top scorers in educational large-scale assessments as reference societies. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 47(5), 647–664.
- Woessmann, L., Lüdemann, E., Schütz, G., & West, M. R. (2007). *School accountability, autonomy, choice, and the level of student achievement: International evidence from PISA 2003* (OECD Education Working Papers, No. 13). Paris: OECD Publishing. Available at: https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/school-accountability-autonomy-choice-and-the-level-of-student-achievement_246402531617